

## Galatians 6:14-18

### Set Apart Unto God

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Today we conclude our study of this letter to the churches of Galatia—this great exhortation to depend only upon the grace of God for your salvation and for walking out your Christian life.

***Galatians 6:14, “But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”***

Last week the main point that we drew out of this passage is that there is no contribution of our own flesh that is made to our salvation or to godly living.

The Lord Jesus Christ has supplied everything needed through His finished work of the cross.

We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. And we live the Christian life by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

So that when we stand before God at the end of our lives we will take none of the credit, but to God alone be all the glory.

Paul asked that God would keep him from ever boasting in anything except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This doesn't mean that Paul never talked about anything except what Christ has accomplished—but he had a passion to always in everything display the glory of God and to bring the focus of every conversation ultimately back to the goodness and grace of God.

God forbid that I should boast ... means forbid that I should rejoice in, revel in, be obsessed with and live for anything except that which Jesus Christ accomplished for us at the cross.

We have much of Paul's history recorded for us in the book of Acts and we have at least 13 of Paul's letters written to his friends preserved in the Bible and they all give evidence that Paul had one passion—that was to talk to others about Jesus.

The Bible reveals that Paul talked about all kinds of things: he talked about the weather, and storms, about, finances, parenting, the government, caring for widows and orphans.

He talked about people who persecuted him, and people who helped him.

He talked about exercising the body, treating sickness, and eating properly.

He discussed sex, marriage, finding contentment in singleness, and even made observations about sports competition.

He quoted poetry, discussed travel plans, reflected on history, talked about the future, about citizenship, and about slavery.

But as you read his letters and read his conversations and you discover that everything that came out of the man's mouth ultimately was focused on lifting up Jesus as the answer, and to point to Jesus Christ as the way, and to lead people into relationship with Jesus as their literal source of life.

It always came back to Jesus. And he repeatedly told people to imitate his example.

What do you boast about?

What do you love to talk about?

For many of you this will be reflected in what you post on social media. It's very revealing to see what people boast about on social media, even if just through their pictures, everyone boasts about something.

Usually people post those things that best portray them as they want to be known, or those things they think are important, or that reflect their interests or desires.

Some people are amazing in their God-glorifying use of social media.

Others display a life totally void of any hint of having been transformed by the cross of Jesus Christ.

I challenge you, when you go home, take a prayerful look at your social media posts and ask, "What am I boasting in? What do my posts say about what is most important in my life? What place do Jesus Christ and my experience with Him have in my posts?"

Do I boast at all in the greatness of my God?

Let's take a few minutes to look at the second part of verse 14.

***Galatians 6:14, "But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."***

When we put our faith in Jesus Christ and yield our life to Him, as Galatians 2:20 says, we are crucified with Christ and your old sinful nature is put to death and is replaced with a new life that is in union with and is one with Jesus Christ.

And that experience, which Jesus calls being born again, is an identity change that dramatically and forever changes your relationship with the world.

Galatians 6:14 tells us that our relationship of belonging to the world ended when we entered into this relationship with Jesus Christ.

*"...the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."*

The expression, “*the world*,” refers to all unbelievers who live separate from the Lord, who are in bondage to sin.

The “world” also refers to the godless values of those who do not belong to God. The *world* refers to their ways of thinking and the pleasures they pursue seeking to find life apart from Christ.

But when we embrace the cross of Christ our nature is changed and the cross of Jesus Christ strikes a deathblow to our old relationship with the world.

When you become a Christian you will soon begin to discover that something in your relationship with the world has forever changed.

We no longer belong to the world and the world can no longer satisfy us the way it used to, and the world can no longer relate to us the way they used to.

**1Peter 4:3-5 NLT**, “You have had enough in the past of the evil things that godless people enjoy—their immorality and lust, their feasting and drunkenness and wild parties, and their terrible worship of idols.<sup>4</sup> Of course, your former friends are surprised when you no longer plunge into the flood of wild and destructive things they do. So they slander you.<sup>5</sup> But remember that they will have to face God, who will judge everyone, both the living and the dead.”

We no longer think the way the world thinks, we no longer talk the way the world talks, we can’t enjoy the pleasures of sin the way we used to.

We no longer value what the world values. We no longer crave the acceptance of the world, all because the world has been crucified to us and we to the world.

You can try to go back to the old way of living but if you were crucified with Christ you can never really go back. You can never enjoy it and can never fit in.

You don’t belong there anymore and the world will know it.

If you are trying to gain the world’s acceptance you will find yourself working against what God has done in your life.

We are not to seek the world’s favor by conforming to the world’s values in our dress, or to the world’s ways of thinking in our speech, or to the world’s morality in our entertainment.

We are to go into the world but not to become like the world.

Like a boat is meant to go out into the water, we are called to go into all the world.

But when the water starts coming into the boat you have a potentially destructive problem. Likewise, when the ways of the world starts influencing our lives, we have a problem.

If the world embraces you and is at home with you then that is a sure sign that there is something wrong in you. You are probably hiding your light.

Or if you find that you are more at home in the world than with the people of God that is a sure sign that there is something wrong in you.

Perhaps you have never been crucified with Christ and the world has never been crucified to you nor have you been crucified to the world. You therefore still belong to the world.

The expression, “...*the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world,*” means that you have been taken out of the world and have been set apart for an exclusive relationship with Jesus Christ.

It means that you have been made holy—you are God’s property, you belong to God—you are Christ’s pure, virgin bride and you are not to mess around flirting with the ways of the world.

Jesus wants you to keep yourself pure for Him.

***Galatians 6:16, “And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.”***

What is this rule? This rule is the summarizing main principle that Paul has been teaching in this book of Galatians—it is that we are saved by grace and we live by grace, not by our efforts at keeping the law—Christ does it all in us and through us.

***“And as many as walk* [meaning the way that you live your day to day life—as many as perform] *according to this rule* [by God’s grace, not by human efforts], *peace and mercy be upon them...*”**

This also connects us back to ***Galatians 5:16*** which told us how we were to walk: “*I say then: Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*”

So we have seen that walking by grace, and being led by the Spirit of God is not antinomianism or lawlessness, but walking by grace is the only way that we are able to fulfill the law (Galatians 5:13-14, and 6:2).

And we are to walk or live a certain way. This means there are things that we are to do, and other things we are not to do.

Yes, as New Testament Christians there is a certain way we are called to perform—according to the rule of grace

We do not perform for God’s acceptance because that is already forever established.

Nor do we perform for the acceptance and approval of man because their approval does not affect my identity or my standing with God. That is secure.

But we do perform—we perform, and we do serve—for the glory of God—we perform to provide an expression of the indwelling life of Christ.

When we let Christ live through us this is done by doing what He desires, not what my flesh desires.

We do not rely on our own resources to perform for the glory of God because God gets no glory from what I do out of the flesh. But we trust in and draw upon all of the grace that God provides to enable us to walk after the Spirit.

The issue is not works verses passivity—both, law and grace, involve work, they both involve serving God and serving others. Performance matters under both law and grace.

But the issue is whose work is it? Whose performance is it? Is it your own work done in the strength of your own flesh?

Or is it Christ serving and loving through you as you depend upon His strength?

Grace means God's power, goodness and love expressed toward the undeserving in generously giving powerless people everything needed for salvation, abundant life and godliness [living a life that performs like Jesus]; all at Christ's expense.

And who is the Israel of God that is mentioned in verse 16?

The true Israel are those Jews who, like Abraham, are also believers in the grace of God to make them righteous.

Paul and all of Jesus' original disciples are examples of the Israel of God. They are in contrast to the Pharisees and Judaizers who believed that circumcision and other works of their own flesh were what made them acceptable to God.

***Galatians 6:17, "From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."***

This is the continuation of the thought Paul had introduced just a few verses earlier, ***Galatians 6:12***, "*As many as desire to make a good showing [they are selfishly motivated, wanting to impress others with their performance] in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised [they wanted to put their own mark upon you—to mark you as being one of them], only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.*"

But their motivation is to avoid the stigma of the cross of Christ; to avoid opposition and persecution for being like Christ.

They wanted to appease those of the world who valued external religious ritual.

Paul had been accused by these Judaizers of being the false teacher and as a result the believers of Galatia had been wondering, "Who can we believe?"

But Paul reminds them that the most important thing is identifying with Jesus Christ and Him crucified—make that always and forever your unapologetic boast.

It is a reminder to us that Jesus calls any who want to be His disciple to deny themselves, to take up their cross and follow Jesus.

“Who is identifying with the cross and all that Jesus did for us on the cross, and who is focusing on what we do and avoiding the costly association with the cross?”

So Paul says, “From now on let no one doubt my motives and my God-given authority, for I bear in my body not just the meaningless marks of circumcision, but the marks of the Lord Jesus.”

The word, “marks” is a English translation of the Greek *stigmata*—meaning distinguishing scars, branding or tattoos that label you and identify who you belong to. (*John Stott, p. 182*)

Paul bears in his body the wounds and scars that have been afflicted upon him because of his constant boast in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What were those marks in Paul’s body?

Look at **2 Corinthians 11:22-26**, these are some of the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ—these are the marks that those who are false seek to avoid by compromising with the world, watering down their message and blending in:

*“<sup>22</sup> Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. <sup>23</sup> Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. <sup>24</sup> From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. <sup>25</sup> Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; <sup>26</sup> in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren...”*

The compromising, false teaching Judaizers did not bear those marks of the Lord Jesus.

In Acts 5, the Apostles of Jesus had been publicly talking to the people of Jerusalem about Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection when they were arrested by the religious authorities.

**Acts 5:28-32**, *“And the high priest asked them, <sup>28</sup> saying, “Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man’s blood on us!”*

Now listen to the followers of Christ boast in the cross of the Lord Jesus.

*<sup>29</sup> But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: “We ought to obey God rather than men. <sup>30</sup> The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. <sup>31</sup> Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. <sup>32</sup> And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.”*

**Acts 5:40-42**, *“and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. <sup>41</sup> So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. <sup>42</sup> And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.”*

Pray that the Holy Spirit would stir up and fan into flame in our hearts a desire to be like that.

Oh God cause us to pray, with Paul, “God forbid that I should boast in anything except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Why do you not boast of the cross of Christ on your social media postings or even in your conversations with your friends?

Is it to avoid the stigmata—of being labeled—of bearing the marks of Christ who is rejected by our society?

Jesus said in, **John 15:18-21**, “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. <sup>19</sup> If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. <sup>20</sup> Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. <sup>21</sup> But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.”

**Galatians 6:18, “Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.”**

Paul began this letter to the Galatians with the words, “Grace to you...” and went on to express his disappointed amazement that the Galatians were so quickly turning away from Him who called them in the grace of Christ to a different Gospel.

Indeed we saw that the whole letter was devoted to the theme of God’s grace—that God does it all—it is only by grace that we are saved and it is only by grace that we can live the Christian life. Apart from Christ we can do nothing of any eternal value.

And now he ends the letter praying that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ would be with their spirit.

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